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DOCTOR, PREACHER, SOLDIER, THIEF: A NEW WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES IN THE ROGUE NARRATIVE OF HENRY TUFTS

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Between the life of Henry Tufts and the narrative of his life, there are a number of discrepancies. According to *A Narrative of the Life, Adventures, Travels and Sufferings of Henry Tufts* (1807), August 14, 1793, was a most difficult day. Condemned to death six weeks before for stealing six silver spoons, Henry Tufts waited in the Ipswich jail for the hour of his execution to arrive. Although he vigorously denied stealing the spoons, he waited without hope for either a reprieve from Governor Samuel Adams or mercy from God. Already he had exhausted every chance of escaping his execution. He had written letters to influential people begging them to intervene and had twice petitioned Adams for clemency. In addition to his own efforts, his faithful mistress, Abigail, had also written letters in his behalf and had even appeared before the governor and the council pleading for a reprieve. Yet Tufts, ever more self-reliant than reliant, had not been content to leave his fate in the hands of God and Governor Adams. After receiving a variety of saws and drills through his cell window, he had twice attempted to break jail. But each time when he was nearly free he was betrayed by one of his fellow prisoners, both tries resulting in a heavier set of chains and a stronger cell.

Speaking in the first person, Tufts described in detail the scenes of these final hours, sparing readers none of the melodrama. Early in the morning he watched the sexton pass his window carrying a pick and shovel on his way to dig Tufts's grave beneath the gallows. Shortly afterward, a certain excited schoolmistress appeared at his window to inform him she had just seen both his coffin and grave ready to receive him. Throughout the day he watched as a

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multitude of people passed by on their way to the gallows, nearly three thousand spectators he estimated. In the early afternoon his guards arrived, and by three o'clock everyone was in place, waiting only for the final execution order from Adams, which was expected to arrive shortly before four. During this last hour Tufts described the fear that possessed him: "The last hour of my surviving time drew near, I shuddered at the sound of every footstep, as it had been the approach of the angel of death! Each moment, was my imagination upon the rack, lest I should hear the iron bolts resound, and the prison doors grate, on their revolving hinges, to open a passage to the scaffold" (301–02). But to the relief of Tufts, and to the disappointment of the spectators, the hour of four passed without the arrival of the final orders. Tufts—by default—won a reprieve.

At least this was the story of the events included in the narrative. Reality was far different. An examination of the historical records reveals a number of discrepancies between the story of the events in the narrative and the actual story of Tufts's life. As he claimed in the narrative, the six months prior to his arrest were spent peacefully practicing one of his favorite professions: that of a "pharmacopolist," a mixture of pharmacist, doctor, wizard, and Indian medicine man (280). While indeed Tufts might have been distributing various roots and herbs during the day, at night he was practicing another one of his favorite professions: theft. The months he spent before his arrest were neither as peaceful nor as prosperous as he would like readers to believe. In January he was arrested for passing counterfeit coin. In February he was arrested again on two similar counts. On April 19, the anniversary of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, a day when everyone else in Massachusetts was celebrating the shot heard round the world, Tufts broke into three separate shops, stealing a variety of goods from each, including several hats, three or four pairs of shoes, and nine raccoon skins. He was caught, and in June was brought to trial before the state supreme court. At the same time Tufts was tried for the theft of the silver spoons.[1]

According to the narrative, the silver spoons—that he had supposedly bought—were the only cause for his appearance in court. In reality, Tufts pleaded guilty to stealing the hats, shoes, and raccoon skins, but innocent to the spoons. Instead of the two witnesses he mentioned in the narrative, a dozen testified against him. According to Tufts, the jury was torn by conscience and deliberated at length, but, actually, a guilty verdict was quickly

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returned and the attorney general did not hesitate to recommend the death penalty. Although burglary was a capital crime in Massachusetts at this time, that penalty was rarely enforced. Only when offenders repeatedly appeared in court, only when the court was convinced that they were beyond either civil or spiritual redemption, was the death penalty given.[2] Such an instance was this. Henry Tufts, in reality, was not condemned for stealing six silver spoons; he was condemned for being a notorious thief who for the past twenty years had broken into hundreds of shops and houses from Maine to Virginia and who had already spent time in more than a dozen jails throughout New England. In the words of the charges read in court against him, he was condemned for "not having the fear of God before his eyes but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the Devil" (Pearson 350).

As for the suspense and melodrama of August 14, historical records again disagree with narrative description. On July 17, fully a month before the execution, the governor and the council issued a reprieve, commuting the sentence to life imprisonment. Therefore, it requires a highly flexible imagination to conceive of the governor and the council issuing a reprieve without bothering to inform anyone. The sexton digging the grave, the three thousand spectators gathering at the scaffold, and the distraught schoolmistress informing Tufts his coffin and grave awaited him, no matter how pleasing to the imagination, are all fictions.

But these discrepancies between the story and the man, between fiction and reality, do not lessen the value of the book. On the contrary, they enhance it. The stretching and reshaping of the truth to better fit narrative requirements, and hence to better please readers, are proofs of the existence of an imaginative and literary impulse. The fact that Tufts and his ghostwriter embellished and at times invented their own reality is an indication of a significant development in American criminal literature.[3] Although the narrative poses as a truthful account of a real person, the Henry Tufts of the book is a fictional creation, a new and unique character specifically intended to appeal to our imaginations. He is a rogue—radically individualistic, extremely opportunistic, and highly unreliable. His pose as a faithful narrator is merely another imposture in a long series of deceptions. But what is most remarkable about Tufts is not his ability to deceive but the fact that after reading his narrative we admire him for this ability. Instead of condemning him for his deceptions, we celebrate him for them.

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Tufts's appearance in American literature is unique. New England's early residents, the Puritans, would certainly have condemned both the man and the narrative. His story stands at the end of a literary evolution, an evolution of three stages in which hundreds of narratives are published and in which a remarkable change in narrative intention takes place. The fascination with criminal behavior as it is reflected in literature is first evident in Puritan New England during the late seventeenth century and developed throughout the eighteenth century. But the criminals portrayed in early Puritan narratives bore little resemblance to the clever and resourceful Tufts. They were, in fact, completely opposite. For the most part, they were murderers, desperate men and women whose crimes and executions were narrated in order to edify and terrify readers. Ironically, it was the Puritan ministers who first introduced the criminal to American literature. In their attempt to protect New England from rogues such as Tufts, they created both the genre and the audience Tufts exploited one hundred years later.

The earliest criminal narratives in America depicted the criminal not as an individual but as an archetypical sinner. When a serious crime was committed and the criminal apprehended, Puritan ministers took advantage of the obvious moral lesson by stressing the inevitability of judgment—first man's, then God's. The prisoner was the most convincing example that a wicked, godless life led to ruin, humiliation, and damnation. In various narratives ministers dramatized the spectacle of the condemned sinner confronting the certainty of death and the awful uncertainties of divine judgment. Consequently, these early narratives had both sacred and secular functions. By far the more important during the first half of the eighteenth century, the sacred function inculcated lessons concerning the inevitability of judgment and retribution. But in order to accomplish the sacred function, ministers often exploited the secular function of satisfying the irrepressible hunger for sensation and story. They appealed directly to the imagination by heightening the sense of drama through the use of sensational rhetoric and vivid imagery. The first stage of narrative development was characterized by criminal confessions and final warnings (primarily written by the ministers and signed by the criminals) in which the criminal's life was manipulated to fit into the traditional Christian pattern of fall, humiliation, repentance, and redemption.[4]

The second stage of development, however, was characterized

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by a reversal in importance between the sacred and secular functions. The appeal to the imagination became more important than the appeal to the conscience. During this stage, which took place roughly between mid-century and Revolution, criminals and crimes were described in greater detail. While retaining the first-person confessional technique, narratives were longer, more sensational, and more realistic. Written primarily by printers with a greater interest in making money than in saving souls, these narratives portrayed the criminal as a distinct personality living in a recognizable world. Although these tales ultimately ended with the criminal's execution, they evoked sympathy through the criminal's description of the forces and factors that led to his or her downfall.[5]

In the third stage this movement toward greater complexity and realism continued. Story and character were fully developed. There was a greater and more literary use of setting, detail, and plot than in earlier narratives. Incidents were no longer isolated but were described at length as episodes in a larger chain of events. The most obvious and significant change, however, was that certain criminal characters escaped the noose, no longer providing the same kind of negative examples as their more desperate predecessors. For the first time the doctrine of inevitable judgment was challenged, raising the possibility of free will in a secular world. By the end of the eighteenth century, particularly after the Revolution, freedom, including personal freedom, took on greater meaning. Self-determination, self-reliance, and self-initiative were celebrated. Defiance of authority became pervasive, almost institutionalized. The third stage of narrative development was characterized by the appearance of rogues, such as Henry Tufts, who mirrored these ideals, sometimes as epitome, sometimes as parody, often as both.[6]

Tufts represented radical freedom, and, in spite of the fact that he had neither loyalty nor virtue, we admire him for his freedom. In a new nation he explored new possibilities. Living in a competitive world where money had replaced the traditional bonds among men, he embraced the profit motive and accepted the vision of the self-made man. He broke with the past, rejected heritage, ignored hierarchy, and defied authority in his pursuit of self-interest. One of the most revealing incidents in the narrative took place early in his career. At the age of twenty-one Tufts asked his father for some sort of inheritance, either a portion of the family farm or money. His father, unwilling to divide the family

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farm into unprofitable shares and having little money, refused. Tufts was indignant. He writes:

> I grew angry and discontented. . . . The reflection that I had pretty diligently served my father during minority . . . and that my labor had contributed in a great measure to the support of the family was constantly present to my indignant view. I considered also, that little or no time had been allowed me to obtain knowledge, so that my education had been totally neglected . . . with considerations of this sort, I was induced to believe myself entitled to some share of my father's estate, and thought I was injured by his ill-timed parsimony . . . I resolved, without more hesitation, to appropriate some portion of his personal property. . . . (21)

Feeling righteous and justified, Tufts proceeded to steal his father's horse, which he sold "for about thirty dollars, ready money" (22). This theft reveals Tufts's unique ability to create his own set of values, his own sense of justice. Throughout the narrative he continued to exercise this freedom, adopting a variety of roles and professions according to circumstances and opportunity. His life was characterized by constant movement—geographic, social, and individual.

Theft was his favorite profession, and the narrative was filled with the many incidents in which Tufts practiced this vocation. There were so many, in fact, that at one point he stated, "for brevity's sake, I shall pass over more trivial incidents" because "an endeavor to particularize the numerous tricks and villanies which first and last I have practiced would be vain and useless talk . . . a mere catalogue of which must swell a volume" (54). Thomas Wentworth Higginson, an admirer of Tufts, was impressed by what he called "the singular perfection of Tufts's system of living" (606).[7] When he was hungry, he stole food. When he needed clothing, he took whatever was available. Once, when he needed new underwear, he stole a pulpit cushion from a church. After selling the feathers, he made a fancy pair of underpants out of the soft green velvet.

Tufts was proud of his expertise and followed his profession in a businesslike manner. Hoping to advance to even greater accomplishments, he put together what he called "a collection of necessaries," a collection of burglar's tools which included saws, drills, keys, and acid—"to soften or eat away iron" he explained (194). With this collection he boasted: "I am positive . . . I could have

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opened, without violence, almost any lock I ever saw" (195). His nighttime reputation was so great that one day when he entered a shoemaker's shop the owner recognized him and presented him with a free pair of shoes so that he would not return later that night to take them.

In addition to his activities as a burglar, Tufts excelled as a horse thief. According to Higginson, he raised horse stealing "to the dignity of a fine art" (606). After stealing his father's horse, he proceeded to spirit away over fifty more in the narrative. He became such an expert that with just a glance he could pick the best horse out of a herd. Similarly, he could enter a barn at night and, by touch alone, pick out the best horse. To escape detection he cleverly disguised the horses he stole. He writes: "I now kept on hand, or in suitable places of deposit, a variety of paints of different colours; by means of which, I could so alter the looks of any horse, that the owner must be puzzled to know him again . . ." (195). Furthermore, he states: "I also kept on hand, several sets of cork shoes, covered with sole leather . . . to prevent the sound of his footsteps being heard" (195).

Tufts was so successful that one time, after altering a stolen horse "by painting his face white, spotting his feet and legs, and clipping his mane and tail," he dared to accompany the owner looking for himself and the very horse he was riding (115). Another time he dared to steal the same horse twice, the second time for the original owner who offered to reward Tufts for the return of his horse. One incident of which Tufts was especially proud occurred when a man boasted that his prize horse was guarded every night and could not be stolen. Tufts could not resist the challenge. He writes: "feeling somewhat nettled, as a gentleman of my profession would, at being bantered thus, I resolved to execute some strategem for the attainment of the horse." He returned later at night with a bottle of rum mixed with opium, and in a friendly manner he warned the two guards to be on the lookout for a horse thief by the name of Henry Tufts. "They said they had frequently heard of the gentleman, and that he was accounted the greatest knave and most arrant horse thief in all that country" (173). Tufts then discussed himself with the guards, during which he freely distributed his potion. Within a short period the guards were asleep and Tufts was mounted on the horse that could not be stolen. He then rode away commenting on the wicked vice of drinking rum.

Next to being a thief, Tufts's favorite role was that of doctor, a

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profession in which he could make some dubious claim. After a serious leg injury, Tufts was advised he would only recover by traveling to Canada and undergoing the treatment of an old Indian medicine woman by the name of "Molly Occult." "Madame Molly," as he called her, not only cured him but, in return for a supply of rum, shared all her secrets with him. He remained with the Indians three years, hunting, trapping, making love to an Indian princess, and learning all he could from Molly. He writes: "I fondly hoped to reap the benefit of my accoutrements at some future period, and my expectations have not been wholly abortive. Indeed, frequently since, has the little medical skill I possessed, procured me a night's lodging, or a morsel of bread, which otherwise I had dearly wanted" (88). Tufts is being unusually modest. When he was not breaking into shops or evading pursuers, he practiced his Indian medicine throughout New England, achieving a high degree of success. The narrative mentioned at least three deathbed patients who were revived by the skill of Dr. Tufts. One of them, an eighteen-year-old girl, was so thankful for her sudden recovery that she could think of no better reward than of giving herself, body and soul, to the doctor.[8]

Yet Tufts was a restless man, and he was not content to remain long either in one spot or in one role. When a sudden tide of evangelical revivalism swept through his town, he did not fail to notice an entirely new set of opportunities. He described this situation as a "theater of action" which demanded "a new character." He writes:

> A set of religionists, styled new-lights, who pretended to far greater sanctity than their neighbors, had arisen of late in divers places. . . . The enthusiastic meetings of these zealots I had frequently attended from motives of curiosity, and to their manner of praying and exhorting had paid the minutest attention. As I was possessed of mimic powers . . . I was quickly in capacity to imitate their canting tone, and to adopt the tenor of their discourses with precision. It was even thought by some of my cronies, that, in the gift of exhortation, I far surpassed all in the town of Lee, or, indeed, elsewhere. (109–10)

Given such encouragement, Tufts purchased a black suit and set off to spread the Word and reap his reward. There is no question about his success. Throughout the narrative he moved congregations to the point of tears and saved souls from Maine to New

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York. In return for preaching, Minister Tufts humbly accepted food, shelter, and donations.[9]

Only once was he questioned. While traveling in Maine, he stopped at a small church in Little Falls and touched the hearts of everyone there except one young woman. As Tufts described the scene:

> I arose, and, with much outward zeal, addressed the assembly in a speech of considerable length. When I made an end to speaking, I resumed my chair, and the pious parson, rising in turn, averred, that I had preached as loud a sermon to his soul, as ever he had witnessed in his life, and that he verily believed I was a heaven born saint. . . . In reply to this a young woman . . . arose also, and exclaimed, "He a saint? So is the devil incarnate; for my own I have no belief in his pretended sanctity, let him profess what he will." At this abrupt declaration the ghostly priest was much astonished and demanded the reason for her jealousy. "If I must explain myself further . . . permit me to say on his entrance into the meeting, that he first surveyed my face, then my feet, then my whole person, in such a carnal way and manner, that I perceived he had the devil in his heart." (110–11)

Although the young woman was correct in her accusation and in assuming Tufts was more devil than saint, the pious parson arose in his defense, severely reprimanding the young woman and ultimately driving her out of the church.

Not content to limit himself to the roles of thief, doctor, and preacher, Tufts found both pleasure and profit in yet another role, that of a wizard. As a colonial con man, he tricked people into believing he could predict the future, locate lost articles, and cast magical spells. He writes: "as a palmister and fortune teller, I cut no contemptible figure; the people supposing me deeply skilled in occult mysteries of fate, and future destinies. Previous inquiries into every body's reputation, habits and business, was the great talisman, by which I was enabled to relate things, marvellous indeed, in the eyes of superstition and ignorance" (218–19). Tufts's ability to exploit superstition and ignorance surprised even himself. Using the same techniques of confidence men of all ages, he first discovered what it was that people wanted to believe, then, relying on his ability to invent roles and fantasies, he created belief. But before Tufts attempted to make people believe something

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about themselves, he first made them believe something about himself. The secret to his success was his ability to create his own reputation.[10] He writes:

> Indeed I found it no way difficult to cajole my ignorant followers into the belief of whatever idle tale I was pleased to fabricate. . . . it was the concurrent opinion, that I must be an extraordinary wizard, complete master of the black art, and able to employ the agency of the devil, whenever I saw fit. The belief of those things I endeavored to cultivate, well knowing, that reputation is sometimes more advantage, in our intercourse with the generality of mankind, than are real acquirements. . . . (271)

Obviously Tufts did not take either himself or society too seriously. Having an insight into the human mind, he traveled throughout New England exchanging roles whenever motivated by either profit or pleasure. According to his own estimate, he "acquired some celebrity in them all" (240). But his list of roles included one historically more significant than the rest. When he returned from his study with "Madam Molly," Tufts discovered another unique "theater of action" that challenged his creativity: war. According to his own account, Tufts joined the Continental army out of curiosity and because he felt being a soldier was "certainly more honorable" than being a thief (101). Throughout his first three enlistments—all short two-month enlistments—Tufts served his country more as a thief than as a soldier, more by carrying off chickens and pigs from farms than by carrying a musket. He writes: "our troops fared, at times, so slenderly, that we had to atone for the dearth of allowance, by stealing pigs, poultry, and such like articles" (103). Surrounded by critical shortage, Tufts became something of a hero, stealing supplies for his fellow soldiers. His proudest moment in the military occurred one day when he stole enough fresh pork out of the commissary to feed his company, then swindled a keg of rum to accompany the meat. After this feast he received the "applause of every guest," soldiers and officers alike (106).

In such circumstances he appeared to be the perfect soldier. Yet Tufts did not try to hide the fact that in reality he was the exact opposite. After short enlistments were discounted in favor of longer ones, Tufts signed up for a three-year term. But after receiving the enlistment bounty, Tufts came to the conclusion that three years was too long a time to devote to any one activity. He soon

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discovered what he called "a convenient opportunity for desertion," and made "use of the privilege" (132). Unfortunately for Tufts this "privilege" proved to be "a source of continual persecution and embarrassment" (131).

For the next five years he was continually hunted and pursued, attesting to the acute manpower shortage during the Revolution. Even such shiftless characters as Tufts were relentlessly sought after. Suspected of being either a thief or a deserter wherever he went, he could not remain long in any one place. Yet when forced to play what he called "hide and go seek" with the army, Tufts's instinct for self-preservation reached even higher levels of creativity (181). During these years on the run he practiced his various professions without the slightest difficulty. He even managed to become a counterfeiter along the way, passing counterfeit Continental dollars to unwary shopkeepers and mistresses. He evaded pursuers by running, hiding, and often by pretending to be someone else. In one of his most clever moments he even disguised himself as the devil. Riding a stolen horse along a country road, Tufts discovered a sentry post situated between two large ponds. He writes:

> I was in no small fear of being stopped in that place, unless I could hit on some curious means of prevention. Preparatory to this, I hurried to a butcher's stall and bought the leg and foot of an ox. About sunset I drew near the style in which was the sentry; when alighting, I tied up one of my legs snug, under my coat, bringing my heel as near my back as possible. I then splintered to my knee the ox's leg and foot, covering the raw parts with old rags, so that my cloven foot might fairly appear, It being my intention to personate him whom I had so long served, viz. the Devil. Thus metamorphosed, I remounted, and rode up, with great resolution to the gate, requesting in a hollow tone, the sentinels to open and let me pass. To this they made no reply, but continued gazing at my cloven foot; at sight of which, it was obvious they were much startled. Without giving them time for reflection, I insisted that the gates should be opened instantly, urging as the cause of my haste, that I had a great way to ride before morning. At length, one of them, without uttering a syllable, stepped forward, and opened the gangway, through which I glided, but not a penny, fearing the devil's money, could I prevail to either to receive for his pains. The next day, it was currently reported that the devil had

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> passed through the pond gate and had been seen to fly away in a flame of fire. (229)

A complete catalogue of all Tufts's roles would indeed "swell a volume." His freedom, curiosity, and pursuit of self-interest led him to assume a variety of minor as well as major roles. In addition to thief, doctor, preacher, wizard, soldier, deserter, trickster, he sometimes posed as a farmer, a land speculator, a Yankee peddler, a wrestler, and even a devoted family man. Throughout the narrative he was particularly successful in two other roles: jail breaker and seducer. During his adventures he was jailed in a dozen jails and several times in the same jail. He escaped from them all—sawing, digging, knocking, and squeezing his way out. Once he even burned his way out. From the old Exeter jail he escaped so many times that it became a contest between Tufts and the frustrated jail keeper. With women he was equally successful. He was twice married and promised marriage to at least ten more. Several times he departed from women with the promise that on a certain day he would return and marry them, leaving the women to bake, sew, and plan for weddings that would never be. Twice he was arrested for such tricks; the first time he bought his way out, and the second time he lied his way out. His greatest act of perfidy occurred when, after serving five years of his life imprisonment, he abandoned the faithful Abigail, whose determined efforts had saved his life, and returned to his first wife. This choice of wife over mistress had little to do with loyalty and less to do with love. After escaping from imprisonment, Tufts discovered that he was penniless, that it was winter, and that his first wife was living comfortably with several prosperous sons.

Finally, there is one last role that must be mentioned. By the end of the narrative Tufts assumed the role of the penitent rogue who offers his life as an example to help others avoid what he calls "those quicksands of vice, on which I have been so often wrecked . . ." (365). But this sudden remorse, this desire to help others, was clearly more convention than conviction, and his role as a penitent merely another imposture.[11] Throughout the narrative Tufts boasted far more than he confessed, and the narrative itself was far too enjoyable—and often comic—to warn anyone. In the end Tufts was not even particularly contrite. Although he vowed never to steal again, his vow did not stop him from stealing away with a neighbor's lusty daughter at the advanced age of fifty-four. Moreover, Tufts's claim that his life had been "wrecked" on

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"quicksands of vice" did not correspond with the final descriptions in the narrative. Returning yet again to his first wife after his adventures with the neighbor's daughter, Tufts states: "Since that period I have carried my dish pretty uprightly; and have been guilty of few or no misdemeanors, but have persevered heroically in regular habits and virtuous resolutions. At times, however, I still budge about as a traveling physician, in the hope of acquiring, in an honest line, if possible, a few pennyworths of bread . . ." (363). Ultimately, Tufts's retirement came about more as the result of his growing old than as the result of a sincere change of heart.

So Tufts was a liar, a thief, and a scoundrel, a man loyal only to himself, a man who deserted family, friends, and country. Why then, after reading the narrative, do we admire him? On one level, Tufts pleases because his narrative pleases. For the time and place it was written the literary merits are considerable. The ghostwriter, whose identity remains unknown but who obviously was well read, mixed irony, understatement, and farce, creating an atmosphere of comic fun. The pleasure Tufts took in tricking Yankee shopkeepers, suspicious farmers, angry sheriffs, and irate mistresses becomes the reader's pleasure as well. Both character and dialogue are good, and, in addition, many techniques of European picaresque are used. Like his European counterparts, Tufts was launched into an indifferent world without either wealth or profession. He was forced to rely on his own cleverness to survive. Moreover, his travels throughout society, both vertical and horizontal, revealed the hypocrisies and vices of others, making his own seem more natural and acceptable.[12]

On another level, we sympathize with Tufts because he arouses our sympathy (perhaps another of his tricks). He justified his crimes by stating he was forced to commit them. Early in the narrative, after his first marriage and after attempting an honest living, he claimed he was unjustly accused of stealing from a neighbor. In eighteenth-century New England society, where a man's reputation was his most valuable possession, accusation was often the same as condemnation. Although proven innocent, Tufts claimed his reputation was ruined. He writes: "Every thing, stolen in the vicinity for years past, was now laid to the charge of Tufts. Protestations of innocence did not avail me, consequently I considered my character ruined and my credit at an end" (31). As a result, Tufts abandoned his family and set out to fulfill the stories told about him. Later in the narrative, he claimed he had no alternative but to steal in order to support his family. He writes:

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"being in continual danger of seizure, either for theft or desertion, I passed every moment in abject fear and perplexity. My farming business was wholly interrupted, and I durst not venture to hire out. To steal or to starve, then, was the question: I wisely preferred the former . . ." (132).

Finally, there is one last level of appreciation. Simply stated, in America we admire rogues. Whether selling visions of the future, acres of swamp, political promises, or miracle medicines, we admire their creativity and their industry, their ability to create and then manipulate belief. Their radical freedom, predatory individualism, and defiance of authority represent the extremities of ideals we all share. We are appreciative of their ends and fascinated by their means. Henry Tufts is one of the first rogues to appear in American literature. The timely appearance of his narrative during the first decade of the nineteenth century is appropriate. Post-Revolutionary America, with its changing political, social, and economic structures, with its anti-intellectualism and antiauthoritarianism, and with its chaotic celebration of freedom and individualism, provided the perfect stage for rogues to act out their various roles. Success and wealth were no longer seen as aristocratic privileges, and democracy fostered the idea that performance was more important than inheritance. Taking advantage of the new opportunities for social mobility offered by the young nation, rogues such as Tufts became skillful actors, adept in the use of costume and setting. In *Modern Chivalry* Brackenridge warned against the dangers of a young democracy exploited by rogues. By exposing the various schemes and pretensions of Teague O'Regan, Brackenridge cautioned readers to become aware of America's vulnerability to roguery and to develop better standards for judging performance (Martin 178). But what Brackenridge satirized, Tufts celebrated. Low birth, lack of education, and a handful of vices were no great obstacles in his pursuit of happiness. He was—indeed—both epitome and parody of the clever, self-reliant individual living in a democracy. Following the example of Ben Franklin, he refused to accept the limitations placed upon him by Providence, which freed him to become whatever he wanted to be. Instead of being a landless farm laborer, he chose to become a thief, a doctor, a preacher, even a wizard. He exchanged identity as often as he did wives and horses. More important, he was successful. In Tufts's world, and in our own as well, deception becomes invention, perception becomes reality. We

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admire Tufts for his performances, both for his inventiveness and for his success.

NOTES

1. Edmund Pearson's edition of Tufts's narrative is the only modern one, and Pearson's research led him to identify discrepancies between the life and the narrative. I am indebted to his edition.

2. For a summary of capital crimes in Massachusetts, see Powers. For useful information concerning law in early America, see the works cited below by Haskins, Billias, Dalzell, Erikson, Farber, Flaherty, Greenberg, Konig, and Nelson.

3. The identity of the ghostwriter is not known. Wadleigh states that "Major Thomas Tash of New Durham" was the ghostwriter who worked with Tufts. Others have agreed. Thompson disagrees, stating that possibly "a clever young lawyer of Dover" wrote the narrative. Clearly Tufts did not, because it is far too literate and literary for him. The practice of using ghostwriters to write first-person criminal narratives was widespread by the end of the eighteenth century.

4. For examples of narratives from the first stage, see works cited by Mather, Chamblit, Henderson, and Moody.

5. For examples of narratives from the second stage, see Ames, Frazier, Halbert, Personal, and Syllivan.

6. For other examples from the third stage, see Bailey, Burroughs, Hine, Howe, Lewis, Smith, Stuart, and Wyman. Bridenbaugh's chapter on Tom Bell is a fascinating account of a rogue by a modern historian.

7. As his life reveals, Higginson was a man of many tastes and interests. Far from condemning Tufts, his essay is a warm appreciation of his unorthodox pursuit of self-interest, and it is the only attempt to see Tufts as anything but a minor curiosity. Higginson accepted both the literary value and the American qualities of the narrative.

8. Indian tribes were often thought to possess miraculous cures for a variety of ailments. Josselyn's book includes an entire section on Indian cures and medicines. If not prevalent, medical quackery was certainly not unknown in early New England. For other literary treatments, see Burroughs and Tyler.

9. Clerical masquerades were also not uncommon in New England during the eighteenth century, and sometimes the distinction between an evangelical, self-appointed preacher and an outright fake was difficult to establish. See Burroughs, Brackenridge, and Howe; in "Wolves in Sheeps Clothing," in the *Magnalia*, Mather devotes an entire chapter to disreputable clergymen.

10. For the best examination of the confidence man in both American literature and culture, see Lindberg. Although he does not mention Tufts, much of his analysis of the techniques of American confidence men and Americans' ambivalent attitude towards them are highly appropriate. For other treatments of the relationship between democracy and roguery in America, see Brodtkorb and Martin. For other treatments of the confidence man, see Kuhlman and Wadlington. For a helpful analysis of changes toward authority in Revolutionary America, see Elliott.

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11. The lack of sincerity in Tufts's final repentance is an important development in the genre of criminal narrative. The earliest narratives are entirely structured around the criminal's final confession and rejection of former life. Confronted with the immediacy of execution and the possibility of damnation, the criminal had only one chance of escaping the wrath of God: by experiencing a true conversion. Both confession of sins and renunciation of the past become outward signs of this change of heart. But while final repentance is the overwhelming motivation for narratives from the first stage, during the second stage it loses its importance. Printers use it more as a convention, as a justification, in order to accomplish more secular and sensational functions. Although the criminal's execution reaffirms the values he had challenged, the narrative of his life and confession of his sins is intended more to titillate than to educate. During the third stage final repentance recedes further in importance, becoming merely a structural device. Tufts's only real regrets are that he got caught so much. Throughout the narrative he expresses real pride at his ability to cheat, rob, and generally exploit others. A more obvious distinction is that by the end of the narrative he escapes execution, even escapes real punishment, and retires to a quiet life on a farm. Thus the narrative ends without reaffirming the values he so seriously challenged throughout most of his life.

12. For examinations of European picaresque, see Alter, Chandler, and Parker. For other treatments of criminal literature, see Richetti, Franklin, and McDade. For a highly useful list of narratives to 1800, see Bosco.

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